The Present

Alteration in Religion

IN

FRANCE.

DISCOURSED OF

In TWO LETTERS,

THE ONE

From a Person of Quality to an Abbot.

THE OTHER

The Abbot's Answer thereunto.

Which may serve as an APPENDIX to the

MISTERY of JESUITISME.

LONDON,

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The Present Alteration in Religion IN FRANCE.

SIR,

I Have not hitherto appear'd scrupulous to you, yet I fear I shall now become so; and if you wonder at that, you will much more at my chusing you my Casuist; for it is to you that I will declare a Doubt of Conscience, not knowing whom else to consult. If you conceive your self unable to resolve it, I confide so much in your Prudence and Friendship, that you will give your self the trouble to procure me an Illumination from some of your Learned Friends, who will instruct me what I am to think of all that we see, which I understand not. You know that I have always sought after Men of worth to conduct me; and by reason thereof I fix'd my self to the Direction of *Messiers de St. Sulpice*, whose

Piety all the World knows. They have taken great care to conduct me into the Simplicity of the Faith, without embroiling me in the Disputes of the Times; and above all, to continue firm by a perfect Submission to the *Pope*, without examining his Decrees, or making distinction or exception in what he commands (seeing the liberty that some take in this matter) being the true Mark whereby to know *Hereticks*, and all such as have an ill Opinion in Matters of Faith. Such persons were then criminally proceeded against, not excepting Bishops themselves, that dared to expound the *Popes* Bulls; and I was told we are oblig'd to believe that the *Pope* was Infallible in Matters of Fact as well as Matters of Faith, though we daily saw Writings which prov'd the contrary. I read some of them out of curiosity, which had like to have done me harm; for they were so well clear'd, that they fully perswaded my Reason. But I fought against this false Light, which would have captivated my Understanding, by answering my self with that which my Confessor oft told me, That in Matters of Faith we must not seek for Evidence, and that we ought to contain our selves within this Holy Ignorance, which instructs our Knowledg to submit, and not to dispute upon the Word of Jesus Christ; who tells St. *Peter* and his Successors, *The Spirit will teach you all things*. There I acquiesced with much satisfaction until the last year: But I must tell you truly, I know not where I

now

now am since that time. There are daily Edicts of Parliament publish'd against the *Popes* Briefs, and there is publickly maintain'd in these Edicts Maximes and Opinions altogether like unto those which were heretofore attributed to the *Jansenists*, and for which they were treated as *Heretick* and *Rebels* to the Church. I have ask'd my Confessor, What the meaning was of this change? He gave me only for Answer, That it was *Interest of State* which oblig'd us to carry our selves differently according to the Times, and that this did not concern me at all. This quieted my Conscience never a whit, but on the contrary I find it much perplex'd; for I ought surely to know what I must hold, and Religion is not to change with the Times. I do indifferent well apprehend that these Humane Interests do oft times change the Conduct of Princes; but the Prelates of the Church in these Occurrences use to speak their Sentiments. Here quite contrary, the Bishops of *France* support the Edicts; no body contradicts them neither in the Chairs, nor Schools, nor even in the Tribunal of Confession, where Men might under the Seal of Secresie speak their Sentiments with freedom; and where the Confessor would be more oblig'd not to suffer that to be a Doubt in the Soul, which formerly they establish'd as the Foundation of Faith; which was the Obligation to believe, and in all things to obey the Vicar of Jesus Christ, who supplies his place upon Earth. What then shall we think of all this

this ? and you your ſelf, Sir, what do you think of it ? Thoſe that ſaid heretofore that which is now publickly ſaid, were counted Heretícks; and it was ſo thorowly believed, that we believe it ſtill. In the mean time the King, the Parliament, and all the Biſhops, ſay the ſame things now. Are they changing of Religion ? Are they going over to them ? But there is no likelihood of that, for they are as much perſecuted as ever. Who can then unfold ſo incomprehenſible a matter ? I conjure you therefore to ſeek out ſome Light herein, and to let me ſhare in it; for in good earneſt in a matter concerning Salvation, I would not remain in any doubt whether I hold the Right or the Wrong. And notwithſtanding all my Confeſſors prohibitions, I reſolve to ſeek after the Light, and ſhall endeavour to diſcern where the Truth lies; ſeeing there is no ſafety but in following it. You will lay the greateſt obligation in the World on me Sir, if you will pleaſe to contribute thereunto, and I ſhall be a thouſand times more all my life long

Your moſt humble and Obedient Servant,

THE

THE
Answer to the Precedent Letter.

I Have, Madam, obſery'd ſo much good ſenſe, and excellent Ingenuity in the Letter which you confided to me, that the Perſon that wrote it, is her ſelf able enough to decide the Caſe of Conſcience which ſhe propoſed, though it includes things ſo contradictory, and which can ſo hardly be reconciled. It is true, That the *Pope*'s Infallibility was maintain'd ſome years ſince as an Article of Faith, both in Matters of Fact and in Matters of Right; and that all thoſe were treated as Hereticks that were of another Mind, the *Biſhops* not excepted, who were as much diſtinguiſh'd by their Piety, as by their Doctrine. But now all is chang'd. The *Pope*'s *Bulls*, heretofore ſo ſacred and ſo inviolable, are highly condemned by Arreſt of Parliament, and thoſe Decrees are ſupported by Authority of the Clergy of *France*. The Vicar of Jeſus Chriſt is no longer Infallible, and many other Maximes are Eſtabliſhing, which were formerly charg'd only upon the *Janſeniſts*. This is it, Madam, which troubles your Illuſtrious Friend, ſhe would willingly have ſome body ſo well inlightned as to preſcribe her the manner how ſhe ought to demean her ſelf in ſo ſtrange a confuſion. She hath

hath consulted her Confessor, and is not yet satisfied. I assure you, Madam, that I pity her, and wish nothing more than to draw her out of those snares wherein she is held. But as I cannot do it by my own Light, I conclude I shall do it possibly by that of others, and it will be hard if I find not in *Paris* some able man to resolve this difficulty, which gives her so much disturbance. As I was considering whither to repair, it came into my thoughts to go to the *Carmelites*, and ask for Father *Cæsar*. You know, Madam, the great reputation he has. The great *Cæsar*, who vanquish'd the *Gauls*, brought not more under his Empire, than this man hath drawn persons of Quality under his Direction. It is true, nevertheless, that I am not satisfied: He answers me nothing else but that we must keep to the Body of the Tree. I understand you Father, said I, the Body of the Tree is the *Pope*; why then doth the *Parliament* and *Clergy* seperate from him? Why then do they question his Infallibility? Can this be done without Heresy? I enter not, said he, into these Disputes, it belongs not to me to judg of those who are set to judg others. But I will ever maintain with the peril of my life, that we must keep to the Body of the Tree. 'Tis well done, said I, it appears to me that you are well fixt to it, and that all the Powers on Earth cannot make you waver. When I saw he would not explain himself farther, I took my leave, and in returning I bethought my self of going to the (*Jesuits*) *Colledg of Clermont*, where I was certain

of

of finding men of easy access. It is the place where the ablest Casuists are bred, and where men are refined and purified daily more and more. I ask'd for him who taught Cases of Conscience, but he was gone forth; I was then advertiz'd of another Father, who came to me with a Gravity haughty enough, yet mix'd with some sweetness. I went towards him at the same time with a submissive respect. (For at this day all Ecclesiasticks of what quality soever, Abbots, Bishops, and Arch-Bishops, do creep to these Gentlemen, else they expose themselves to their indignation, and pass for *Jansenists*) so after I had made my homage to the Reverend Father, I let him understand, whereby to be the more favourably heard, that I came on behalf of a Lady of Principal Quality, whose Conscience is troubled about all these Affairs that pass at this time in the Church. And to the end he might be better inform'd, and answer more accurately to every particular, I shew'd him the Letter you had sent me. He read it with good attention, and after he had commended the facile and natural manner wherewith it is written, he told me (with great ostentation, as venting a Profound Doctrine; and with that great disdain which it inspires towards the ignorant) that he did not see in the least any shadow of difficulty in the thing, and that it was drowning ones self in a drop of water. I told him however that it is not this Lady alone that drowns her self, Father *Cæsar* that great Gaul

and Confeſſor (who doubtleſs is known to you) drowns himſelf too, though he thinks he hath ſav'd himſelf very happily, by telling me a hundred times, that we muſt keep to the Body of the Tree. This Father did not much wonder at the Name of Father *Caſar*, He is a good Man, ſaid he, ſmiling to himſelf, and ſhaking his Head. Perceiving this Father ſpeak with ſo much Zeal, and ſo good an Opinion of himſelf, I expected that he would ſpeak nothing but Oracles. How happy am I (ſaid I, Sir) to have met with you! for I even imagine you will let me ſee the Heavens open: Pray therefore do me the favour to tell me how you reconcile all that we ſee now adays, to that which paſs'd formerly? O very eaſily, Sir, ſaid he: You know heretofore that it was of importance for the honour of our Society (which one may well ſay are the ſureſt Pillars of the Church) to eſtabliſh the Infallibility of the Pope as an Article of Faith, that ſo we might get him on our ſide, and oblige him to uſe all his Spiritual Power for us againſt the *Janſeniſts*, who then made a cruel War upon us; and you ſee, God be praiſed, how we have ſucceeded. They have done their utmoſt Efforts to ruin our Doctrine, and rendred our Morals ridiculous and extravagant; and though in appearance they would needs bear us down with the Authority of the Fathers, Councils, and the Scriptures, we have nevertheleſs managed things ſo well, that they themſelves have been declared Hereticks. In fine, that dan-

gerous Cabal hath been diſſipated (ſaid he) and are become Wanderers and Vagabonds, and can very hardly find any place of ſafety for themſelves upon Earth. Now, as at preſent there is nothing to be feared from that ſide, and that other Affairs have occurred wherein we judg'd it our Intereſt not to have ſo great reſpect for the *Pope*, and to have much for the King, to whom we are infinitely oblig'd: We have believed that to maintain the Rights of his Crown, and to preſerve our ſelves continually in his Grace and Favour; we might follow the Opinion of many Doctors, who believe that the Pope may be deceived: ſo that you muſt not wonder if in divers times we believe different things. But Father, ſaid I, does Religion then change with the Times? You deceive your ſelf, ſaid he, it changeth not for all that, it remains ever the ſame, and is unchangeable; though according to divers occurrences we are ſometimes of one Opinion, and ſometimes of another. There lies the Miracle of the Doctrine of *Probability*, which far from ſhaking the Tenets of Religion, does confirm it; and no body knows better the value and price of it than our ſelves, by the moſt frequent uſe we make of it. For by this means it is that we have ſpread Chriſtianity almoſt thorow the whole World, and eſtabliſh'd it without any great contradiction in the midſt of the moſt ſavage and barbarous People, by ſuddenly ſuppreſſing what ever might quaſh or give any averſion or diſtaſte.

It is well known what we have done for the Glory of Jesus Christ in *China*: his Death and Sufferings Preach'd there, caus'd horrour and exposed us to all sorts of outrages and violence. We believ'd therefore that *Probably* we might not tell them a word of it, and that it would suffice us to preach up his Miracles, his triumphant Ascension into Heaven, and all that, that might give them a pleasing and advantagious Idea. You cannot imagine, Sir, the progress that we have made, and do daily make, by means of this most Divine Doctrine of *Probability*, and that God hath doubtless inspir'd it into us, that we might labour more *Profitably*, and with less danger to our persons, in the Conversion of so great a number of Infidels. Whilst the Father was thus talking, I admired to him the conduct of those new Apostles, and compar'd them to those of the first Christians, who preach'd not the Gospel with so much precaution, and who had not for their guidance in their *Mission*, this *Probability*, which would have sav'd them much Blood: But it pleased not God to Inspire them with it. This Grace was reserv'd for these last Vessels of Election, who were to carry his Name more remote in the World, and render their labours more illustrious. But as this Father spake with much zeal and sincerity, so I declar'd my self much satisfied. I am even ravish'd (said I) Sir, with all that you have told me, and if I understand it aright, it seems to me that the Popes Infallibility is but a *Probable* Opinion, upon which

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one may chuſe whether to be either for or againſt it, as it pleaſeth one beſt. You are in the right, ſaid he. Then give me leave, Reverend Father, ſaid I, to aſk you a little Queſtion upon it, Can one impute a probable Opinion to any as a Hereſie? Yea doubtleſs, ſaid he, if the Opinion be probably Heretical. Then reply'd I, Father, It is an Opinion with thoſe of your Society, That it is probably Heretical not to believe the *Pope's* Infallibility, for that is one of the greateſt Hereſies which you charge the *Janſeniſts* with, and by conſequence you muſt now look upon, and ſtum all as Heretical, who have the ſame Sentiment: that is to ſay, the Gentlemen of the Parliament, and all the Biſhops of *France*. You are too quick, ſaid he, you have already forgotten that which we have newly eſtabliſh'd as a thing indiſputable, and which you learn in our ableſt Caſuiſts, That in reſpect of a *Probable Opinion*, one may chuſe *Pro* or *Con*, which ſide you like beſt. Argue therefore a little more equally upon that Principle (ſaid he) and draw your Conſequences thence better. For if it be probable, That it is a Hereſie not to believe the Infallibility, it is alſo *Probable* that it is no Hereſie. Men have their choice to ſay either Yea, or Nay, as it is moſt advantageous to them. So then, Father (ſaid I) though the Biſhops, the Parliament, and the *Janſeniſts* do not differ upon the Subject of Infallibility; and though they all believe the ſame thing, it being of the higheſt Importance to

you

you to lead and manage the Biſhops and Parliament, you declare them to be moſt Orthodox. But for the *Janſeniſts*, who are ſo contrary to you, you will ever declare them Hereticks. Yes, it is ſo, ſaid he, which we can do with a good Conſcience, by directing our *Intentions* as we ought; and therein mind nothing but the glory of God, and that of our Society. But Father (ſaid I) what would you do, if the Clergy and Parliament ſhould contend with, or differ from you; would you ſpare them any more than the *Janſeniſts*? We would beware (ſaid he) of engaging two ſuch powerful Bodies againſt us; we would take ſuch meaſures as might not hurt us. Prudence would ſuggeſt to us a Thouſand Expedients to conjure down that Tempeſt. It were then convenient to diſſemble for ſome time, and as occaſion ſhould offer to fall foul upon ſome of them, and render them ſuſpect, to deter others. Are you ignorant of what we have done (continu'd he) to other Prelates, that dared to claſh with us? I could name you a ſufficient number, whoſe Doctrine and Conduct we have cry'd down. I remember it, Father (ſaid I) we cannot taxe you with being wanting in that. Death it ſelf extinguiſheth not your Reſentments, ſo juſt are they. And to ſpeak only of the late Biſhop de *Pamiez*, all the World knows you reſerve thoſe *Reſentments* ſtill againſt him; and that not being able to exercize your Zeal againſt his perſon, you employ it to hinder (as one may ſay) his repoſe in his Grave;

by

by rendring his Memory hateful. You, the Fathers of *Paniez*, have particularly signaliz'd your selves herein. For the People running to the Sepulchre of this Prelate, and giving him the honours as to a Saint, you labour'd with might and main to perſwade them that he was damn'd, becauſe he had Excommunicated Three of your Society. 'Tis in effect a Crime never to be remitted, neither in this World, nor in the World to come. Mock not (ſaid he) every Prelate that Excommunicates us, is himſelf Excommunicated (*ipſo facto*;) and if he repairs not this injury before he dies, and asks us not Pardon for his Temerity, it is impoſſible that he can be ſaved. But not to ſtray too far from our Subject, be perſwaded (continu'd he) that there is nothing ſo commodious as our Doctrine of *Probability*; and notwithſtanding all the Endeavours the *Pope* hath uſed againſt it, it ſhall ever continue firm with us. 'Tis in vain to oppoſe it, it is of abſolute neceſſity in the World. What means elſe is there to reconcile ſo many things which ſeem incompatible? And how can we ever reſolve the Caſe of Conſcience of your Marchioneſs or Dutcheſs? If after all this there remains any Scruple with her, let her but take the pains to come and ſee me, and I am confident ſhe will be freed of all her Doubts. This Madam, is all the Solution I could draw from this Father; if it be not ſatisfactory, I ſee no better means

means him to accept his Offers; he is full as willing as able; and I am, Madam,

Your most humble

and

most obedient Servant,

The Abbot of - - -

FINIS.